

HOW ARE EU VALUES PROTECTED?



EU values aren't just words in a treaty—they come with **mechanisms** to ensure that all member states follow them. The EU uses a mix of **monitoring, legal actions, and financial penalties** to hold governments accountable.

1 | Annual Rule of Law Reports



2 | Venice Commission – The EU's Watchdog on Democracy



3 | EU Funds Linked to Rule of Law Compliance – the conditionality mechanism



The EU now ties **funding to respect for the rule of law**—if a country violates democratic principles, it can **lose billions of euros**.



Hungary and Poland have already had **EU funds frozen** over concerns about judicial independence and corruption.

4 | Article 7 TEU – The “Nuclear Option”



If a country **seriously violates EU values**, the EU can launch **Article 7 proceedings**, which could lead to **losing voting rights in the EU Council**.



Poland and Hungary have both faced this process, though it's hard to enforce because it requires **unanimous approval** from all member states.



To note :

There is no **mechanism in the EU treaty to exclude a member state** from the European Union.

A member state can decide to leave like the United Kingdom did in 2020 but it is assumed that EU countries, despite on the diversity in political beliefs across the 27 governments, all share the same understanding and support for EU values.

Recent developments with Hungary and Poland in particular have proved that it is not the case.



THE EU VALUES DEBATE: WHERE'S THE TENSION?



Protecting EU values isn't always easy. Some governments claim the EU is **overstepping** and interfering in national affairs. Here are the key **flashpoints** in the debate:

1 | National Sovereignty vs. EU Oversight

Some leaders argue that the EU **shouldn't dictate** how they run their judiciary or media.

Others say that by **joining the EU**, countries agreed to uphold these values —so the EU has every right to enforce them.

2 | Free Speech vs. Media Control

Press freedom is **under threat** in some member states where governments control media outlets.

The EU is **pushing for stronger laws** to protect journalists and prevent media takeovers.

3 | Using EU Funds as a Weapon?

Some leaders claim that withholding EU funds is a **political tool** used to punish governments with different ideologies.

The EU insists it's about **protecting taxpayers' money from corruption and democratic backsliding**.





WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If the rule of law weakens, democracy itself is at risk.

Without independent courts and a free press, corruption spreads, and governments can manipulate elections.

Your rights as an EU citizen depend on strong institutions.

Whether it's freedom of movement, privacy protections, or fair working conditions, these rely on governments following EU rules.

The EU's credibility is on the line.

If it can't enforce its own values, can it still claim to be a union based on democracy and human rights?

CONCLUSION: SHOULD THE EU DO MORE OR STAY OUT?

Some say the EU needs **tougher enforcement**, like automatic sanctions for rule-of-law violations.



Others argue that national governments should have **more autonomy** over their own legal systems.



What do you think?

Should the EU have more power to enforce its values, or is it already going too far?

